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**From:** Matthews, Joan  
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**Subject:** FW: DEP Release: DEP and Newark Public Schools Provide Update on District Water Status

-----Original Message-----

From: depnews@dep.state.nj.us [mailto:depnews@dep.state.nj.us] On Behalf Of Hoover, Debra  
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Subject: DEP Release: DEP and Newark Public Schools Provide Update on District Water Status

IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
March 11, 2016

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#### DEP AND NEWARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROVIDE UPDATE ON DISTRICT WATER STATUS

(16/P13) TRENTON - The Department of Environmental Protection has developed a water testing regimen for the presence of lead in all schools in the Newark Public Schools system, which will begin next week, Commissioner Bob Martin and Newark Superintendent of Schools Christopher Cerf announced today.

The plan, which was submitted today to the federal Environmental Protection Agency for additional input and review, will include all 67 school locations in the district, with initial sampling to take place in the 30 school district buildings that recorded elevated levels of lead on certain taps in recent results.

As part of the plan, every faucet or fountain in a school building where people can take a drink of water and every food preparation sink, will be tested. The plan calls for proper collection of the data by water testing laboratories, quality assurance, chain of custody and documentation.

The DEP anticipates receiving results for tests at the individual school level as soon as a week after the start of testing, and on a rolling basis thereafter. It will determine next steps on a case-by-case basis.

"We are working closely with the Newark Public Schools system to execute a plan to get a comprehensive understanding of any levels of lead within the district buildings, especially with the 30 schools recently identified with elevated levels," Commissioner Martin said. "Schools impacted by elevated lead levels in the most recent round of sampling will remain on bottled water until the tap water is deemed safe to drink."

Additionally, the DEP has now obtained full lead-testing data from the school system from the previous four years: 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The DEP is in the process of analyzing and validating the data. The DEP expects the results of that analysis some time next week, and expects to have a more complete picture of the remediation and filtration protocols the district used to address any previously recorded elevated lead levels in the water.

The DEP is also looking to the school district to provide data on other previous testing or remedial

actions that may have been performed.

"We are in the process of reviewing and validating past years' water sampling data to get a better sense of where there may have been elevated levels of lead previously, and how those situations were addressed or mitigated by the district," Commissioner Martin said.

The DEP is also coordinating with Newark Public Schools to assure the district continues to have ample alternate water supply for students, faculty and staff. There is currently adequate water supply available through Spring Break - the week of March 21 - which includes water already delivered by the State, Newark City and Essex County. The district is also in process of having water coolers installed in various schools.

"Our number one priority is to continue to make sure that students have access to healthy drinking water," said Superintendent Cerf. "This was the driver behind our decision to bring new water into schools on Wednesday, and will continue to be our priority in the days ahead.

"Our families, community members, and staff have shared questions and concerns about historical testing data since we took this action, and the district's response to that data," Cerf added. "As we have shared, we are working with the DEP to do a full analysis of past results, and my team is conducting an internal review to identify what specific actions were taken in response to those past results. We expect to be able to share findings from these reviews as soon as next week."

DEP continues to emphasize that the Newark Water Department's source water is clean and safe to drink. In the vast majority of cases where lead is found in drinking water, it enters through the water delivery system itself when it leaches from either lead pipes, household fixtures containing lead, or lead solder.

Drinking water alone is not typically associated with elevated blood lead levels. It is the buildup of lead from all sources over time that determines whether harmful health effects will occur.

The DEP, Newark Public Schools system and the state Department of Health encourage concerned parents to have their children tested by their primary care provider, or at a Newark Health Clinic, where free testing is available.

A New Jersey Department of Health fact sheet on lead in drinking water is available at [http://www.nj.gov/health/ceohs/documents/dw\\_lead\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/health/ceohs/documents/dw_lead_factsheet.pdf)

For more information on lead in water, visit <http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/lead-water-faq.pdf>

For information on New Jersey's water quality testing program, visit the DEP's Division of Water Supply and Geoscience page at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply>

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